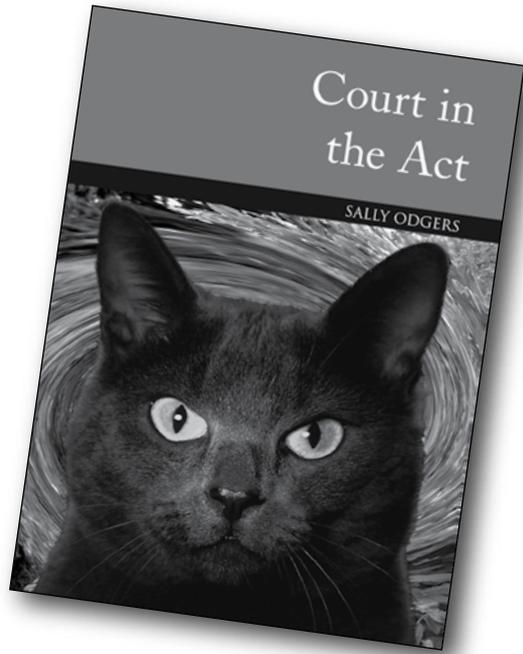


Springboard 5

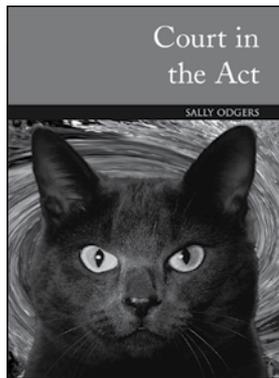


Court in the Act

Fiction

| Title | Text Type | Word Count |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Rogue Robot | Science Fiction | 6000–6900 words |
| The Last Straw | Realistic Fiction | 6000–6900 words |
| Asteroid Attack | Science Fiction | 7000–7900 words |
| Go to Your Room | Humour | 7000–7900 words |
| The Potter's Son | Myth | 8000–8900 words |
| Court in the Act | Fantasy | 8000–8900 words |

We have designed these lesson plans so that you can have the plan in front of you as you teach, along with a copy of the book. Suggestions for teaching have been divided into questions and discussion that you may have with students before, during, and after they read. You may prefer to explore the meaning and the language in more detail before students read. Your decisions will depend on the gap between students' current knowledge and the content, vocabulary, and language of the book they are about to read. The more information students have up front, the easier it will be for them to read the text.



COURT IN THE ACT

Upper level fiction

Text type: Fantasy

Reading age 11.5–12.5

Word count 8000–8900

Guide questions for teachers are in *italics*.

Before Reading

Activate prior knowledge by asking students if they have read the books or seen the films *Alice in Wonderland*, *Toy Story*, or *Harry Potter*. *What happens in these stories that does not happen in real life?* Guide the discussion to focus students' attention on the way the writers have brought animals, make-believe creatures, and toys to life. Explain that this is called creating a fantasy.

Sometimes authors will combine fantasy with other elements when writing a story. Sometimes fantasy can be combined with comedy, as in the film Shrek. Ask students to consider why an author might do this. Discuss.

COVER

Before Reading

Read the title and ask the students to consider what this story is about.

Discussion guide:

What does the title suggest to you? What does it mean to be caught in the act? There is a play on the word caught. What does the word court mean?

Does the illustration tell you anything?

Read the blurb on the back cover.

Discuss the word fantasy. What does this tell you to expect in this story?

What sorts of results could the experiments have?

Are we told where and when this story is set?

Consider the title, cover illustration, and blurb. What do you think happens in this story?

THE SIGNING CHIMPANZEE

Before Reading

Read page 4. What do you know about the chimpanzee? Who might be telling this story?

As you read this chapter, you will learn who narrates this story, and you will be introduced to the other main characters. Take note of what you learn about Alia and Nathaniel and their families. At the end of the chapter, Alia thinks up a little project. Be ready to share what you think about this.

After Reading

Who is narrating this story? What is Matthias's relationship to the main characters? What do the others call him for short? What does he want to be when he grows up?

What did you learn about the Singhs and the Ravens? How long have the children known each other? Revisit page 5 to clarify if needed.

What do Nathaniel and Alia have in common?

What do you learn about the personalities of these characters?

How old are Nathaniel and Alia?

Who else do we learn about? Prompt students to recall Alia's sister, Seeta. What does it mean to be a techie?

What do you learn about Tatters?

What is Project Tatters?

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

Before Reading

What is a communication breakdown? Read page 12. What do you think this chapter might be about? Prompt students to recall the experiment suggested by Alia at the end of Chapter 1.

Read this chapter and find out what is meant by the title of this chapter. Be ready to share what the children decide for their experiment.

After Reading

What do you learn about how dogs communicate with each other? Prompt students to check the text to clarify.

What do you learn about how cats communicate? Prompt students to check the text to clarify.

What animal do the children decide to target for their experiment?

What did you learn about Basher McCreaghan? Do you expect his first name is really Basher?

COCKATOO CONVERSATION

Before Reading

Read page 18. What might this title suggest about what is coming up in this chapter? How much time has lapsed since the events in the last chapter?

As you read this chapter, you will hear the debate about communicating with animals. Be ready to share the arguments you hear and what you think.

After Reading

The children have some interesting conversations about training animals and whether the animals may be training the humans. What did Nathaniel share about training canines on page 19?

Share what happened at the cockatoo retirement village in the park. How long can cockatoos live? What debate occurred between Alia and Nathaniel? What do you think about this argument?

What are Matthias's thoughts about the differences between communicating with dogs and chimpanzees?

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE CAT KIND

Before Reading

What is a close encounter? Read page 30. Invite predictions about what Nathaniel and Alia might have been doing. Why do you think Nathaniel keeps Matthias informed? Why might he not tell Alia that he is keeping Matthias informed?

As you read this chapter you will learn more about Nathaniel and Alia's attempts to communicate with the animals. Be ready to share what you learn. They will also encounter a special cat. Jot down who this cat is and why it has special relevance to the children.

After Reading

What animals have Nathaniel and Alia been attempting to communicate with? What types of responses have they had from the animals?

On page 32, Nathaniel leaves quickly when Alia suggests telling Matthias about what they have been doing. Why do you think Nathaniel has not told Alia that Matthias has been kept informed? Why did Nathaniel suggest taking Tatters for a walk?

What success did Nathaniel and Alia have communicating with the black cat? Who did they eventually recognize this cat to be?

Why might Nathaniel and Alia have felt very scared at the end of the chapter?

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Before Reading

What does this chapter title mean? Read page 40. What do you think Matthias and Seeta see and why do they think it is really weird?

As Nathaniel and Alia sit staring at the black cat, something strange happens. Read this chapter and be ready to share what it is. Also take note of why Matthias and Seeta do nothing to help their siblings.

After Reading

What happened as Nathaniel and Alia tried to communicate with the black cat? What part of the cat seemed to mesmerize them?

What happened next?

Why didn't Matthias and Seeta stop to help their siblings?

What do you think has happened to Nathaniel and Alia? Describe their experience. Prompt students to revisit the book for details if needed.

What might happen next?

FOLLOW THAT CAT

Before Reading

Read page 45. What has happened since the incident with the cat? What does Matthias think might have happened? What makes Nathaniel confident that the incident was not a dream?

As you read this chapter you will find out what Nathaniel and Alia have learned about communicating with animals. They find they can understand the signals of the animals, and will be led on a journey to learn more. Be ready to discuss what they happens.

After Reading

What interesting discovery did Nathaniel and Alia make about communicating with the animals? On page 48 they pinpoint the real problem of inter-species communication. What is it? Refer to the text to check if needed.

How does the cat communicate with the children?

What do you think the cat is going to show them if they follow? What could the court is waiting mean? Who could they be going to meet? Who is he?

COURT OF THE CAT

Before Reading

Read page 50. What do you think is going on here? What does the word wariness mean? Whose eyes might be watching Nathaniel and Alia?

As you read this chapter you will learn what the court is. Jot down some notes about what Nathaniel and Alia learn from the animals, and be ready to share your feelings about the messages that are communicated to them.

After Reading

What is a tom?

On page 51, Oriental toms are described as possibly ferocious, often with little provocation. What do you think this means? What does this tom communicate to the children? What do you think this means?

The children also meet a pit bull. What do you know about pit bulls? What does this dog communicate to Nathaniel and Alia? What does the pit bull mean by the comment, What was made cannot be unmade?

What does the goat communicate to them?

What common theme are the animals communicating to Nathaniel and Alia?

Why do you think Nathaniel felt so uncomfortable during the encounter? What is the court in this book?

FURTHER ACCUSATIONS

Before Reading

What is an accusation? Read page 55. Who is Nathaniel talking to? What does Nathaniel mean about never claiming to be a hero?

In this chapter you will learn more about how the court operates and who the animals taking part are. Find out what is going on and be ready to share your thoughts about the issues the animals are raising about humans.

After Reading

What did you learn about all the animals at the court?

Is there a social issue being communicated to the children? What is it?

Alia had an encounter with a kangaroo. What was the kangaroo's issue with humans?

On page 60, the pit bull says, You blame us, confine us, exploit us, deny us the chance to be ourselves, change us and then, you change your mind and say we have to go. What do each of these things mean? Prompt students to give an example of each kind of behaviour.

Which animal do you think steps in at the end to remove blame from Nathaniel and Alia?

THE ADVOCATE

Before Reading

What is an advocate? Read page 61. What is going on in the opening to the final chapter?

As you read the final chapter you will find out who arrives to advocate for the children. You will also learn how Nathaniel and Alia plan to use their knowledge to take action against the improper treatment of animals. Read on and be ready to discuss how this story ends.

After Reading

*Who arrived to speak on behalf of the children?
How did Tatters present the case for the children?
Do you think the court were satisfied with his explanations? Why or why not?*

Why did Nathaniel and Alia decide to tell Matthias what had happened? What do they hope will happen as a result?

What are your thoughts on the issues presented in the court? Had you considered these issues before reading this book?

▲ CODE BREAKER

When authors say that something is like something else they are using a device called a simile. For example, Tom is like a bull with a sore head tells us that Tom's bad temper is like a bull's bad temper. Why do you think an author might write this instead of writing Tom is grumpy?

Discuss these similes from the story:

- *squatting like a pair of birds on a perch*
- *eyes the shade of green glass marbles*
- *the black cat was perched like a rather handsome gargoyle*

■ MEANING MAKER

Assist the students to make links between the fantasy characters in this story to those in other books, shows, and films.

Begin by introducing the story *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, or another text with fantasy creatures. Read the story to the students and discuss the appearance and qualities of the characters. Ask students to compare the characters from this read-aloud text to the talking animals in *Court in the Act*.

◆ TEXT USER

Tell students that fictional stories enable the author to take readers to another place, away from real life. *By creating plots, settings, characters, and events, the author is able to take the reader on a journey. On this journey, the reader can experience feelings and emotions through the lives of others.*

In this story we saw the world through the eyes of some animals.

How did reading Court in the Act distract your mind from other things going on around you?

Did you feel sorry for any of the characters? Explain.

Did you like any of the characters immediately? Explain.

Did you care about what happened to Nathaniel and Alia? Explain.

Did you enjoy going on this journey? Explain.

● TEXT CRITIC

In this story, we were confronted with a range of social issues through the eyes of the animals.

There is a point to all stories and sometimes an author will write a narrative to both entertain and to teach the reader something about their world. In this story the reader is exposed to the different points of view of the animals. Through their eyes, a range of issues are presented for the reader to reflect upon.

Discuss the issues raised by the animals in this story and invite discussion as the students reflect.

USING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Provide modelling materials for this task.

Model: Make a model of an animal. (S)

Create: Create the habitat for this animal. You may use objects from the environment in your design. (N)

Explain: Explain how humans can best support this animal to survive in its natural environment. (V)

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

The theory of multiple intelligences was developed by Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University. Howard Gardner's theory suggests that the current view of intelligence, as measured by IQ tests, is far too limited and discriminates against students who think in different ways. He proposes taking a broader perspective and has identified eight different intelligences. These are:

verbal-linguistic intelligence – word smart

logical-mathematical intelligence – number/
reasoning smart

spatial intelligence – picture smart

bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence
– body smart

musical intelligence – music smart

interpersonal intelligence – people smart

intrapersonal intelligence – self smart

naturalist intelligence – nature smart

Multiple intelligences have enormous potential as a tool in furthering reading and language development. Traditionally, the teaching of language and reading has focused mainly on two intelligences: logical-mathematical and verbal-linguistic. This means that many students who possess different intelligences do not receive the necessary opportunities, encouragement, instruction, or reinforcement to succeed with reading as well as they might.

Court in the Act

Name _____

Graphic Organizer (before and during reading)

| | | | |
|---------|--------------|------------------|---|
| Plot | Setting | Main characters | Main characters: strengths and weaknesses |
| Problem | Complication | Other characters | Resolution |

What the main characters learned

Court in the Act

Name _____

🔍 Code Breaker

Find these words in the story, record their dictionary meaning and write a new sentence containing each word.

emphatically (page 6)

Dictionary meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

pompously (page 19)

Dictionary meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

gargoyle (page 21)

Dictionary meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

aviary (page 22)

Dictionary meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

determination (page 35)

Dictionary meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

intently (page 36)

Dictionary meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

vortex (page 42)

Dictionary meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

Court in the Act

Name _____

☐ Meaning Maker

Think of three animals that you would like to learn more about. Write five interesting questions to ask each animal that humans do not already know answers to. Put an asterisk (*) next to the question you are most interested in learning the answer to. On the bottom line write why you are most interested in this question. The animals you choose could be pets or wild animals.

Animal: _____

*Why I am most interested in this response:

Animal: _____

*Why I am most interested in this response:

Animal: _____

*Why I am most interested in this response:

Court in the Act

Name _____

🕒 Text User

List the most important points from each chapter.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| The Signing Chimpanzee | Communication Breakdown | Cockatoo Conversation |
| A Close Encounter of the Cat Kind | A Different Perspective | Follow That Cat |
| Court of the Cat | Further Accusations | The Advocate |

Court in the Act

Name _____

● Text Critic

The author wrote this story to entertain you. But did Sally Odgers also hope to teach you something?

1. Why was it important that the characters cared about animals?

2. How would this story have been different if the main characters did not care about animals?

3. How did your feelings about how humans treat animals change as you read the story?

4. Do you think the author intended to make the reader feel this way? Explain.

5. Are there ways that you are like one of the main characters? Explain.

7. Were you surprised that Tatters came to support Nathaniel and Alia at the court? Why or why not?

8. How might the author want you to think about the animals we keep as pets?

9. Has this story inspired you to treat animals differently? Explain.

10. Which animals are most at risk of human interference? Explain.

Court in the Act

Name _____

Multiple Intelligences
Naturalist

Choose three animals from the book and complete the table below.

| Animal | Three interesting facts about this animal | Physical description | Sound this animal makes |
|--------|---|----------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Court in the Act

Name _____

Fantasy

Write down all the elements of fantasy in the story. Use the book to help you.

How would this story have been different if the animals did not talk? Explain.

Why do you think this story was narrated by Matthias and not Nathaniel or Alia? Explain.

What other fantasy books/TV shows/films do you know?

Think of three people who might enjoy this story. Explain why.

What sorts of fiction texts do you prefer?

What is the best fiction text you have read or heard? Why?
